U.S. REFUGEE AIDE FACES NEW DELAY

Approval of Ex-C.I.A. Man's Appointment Is Held Up by 2d F.B.I. Investigation

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MIAMI, Oct. 30—The confirmation of a Cuban American, appointed last August to direct the Cuban Refugee Program, faces a new delay following lengthy background investigations by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and other agencies.

A spokesman for F. David Mathews, the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, who is responsible for the Cuban program, said Friday that the F.B.I. report on the appointee—Ricardo Nunez—would be sent to the Civil Service Commission this week. [7 OCT]

"It's out of our hands," the spokesman said, adding that a decision might not be made until December. Other Federal officials said they could not recall a "super-grade" appointment for which confirmation by the commission had taken so long.

Mr. Nunez, a wealthy Miami builder, was a top executive of Gramco, a bankrupt investment fund based in the Bahamas that was owned by Robert L. Vesco, the financier who fled to the Caribbean after he was indicted on Federal charges of fraud and conspiracy.

A C.I.A. Operative

Between 1958 and 1963, when he joined Gramco, Mr. Nunez was an employe of the Voice of America. During most of that time, he has said, he was also an undercover operative of the Central Intelligence Agency.

His new $36,000 job, although subject to the confirmation by the Civil Service Commission, is a political appointment. It also requires a top security clearance.

The refugee program he has been named to head spends about $90-million a year. Its former director—like his predecessors, an expert social worker—died in March, and Caspar W. Weinberger, then the new Secretary, named Mr. Nunez to the post five months later.

Before the appointment was announced, some experts in Miami felt the position should go to a Cuban for the sake of economy. They argued that since virtually no new Cuban refugees were coming to the United States, the program could be phased out and its functions absorbed by other [illegible]

Supporters of Mr. Nunez have insisted, however, that his wide-ranging business and civic activities have qualified him for the job.

In late August, after The New York Times learned that Mr. Nunez was a defendant in a dozen of civil lawsuits here, the F.B.I. reopened its inquiry into his background.

30 Court Cases

According to court records in Dade and Broward Counties, about 30 companies and individuals and several law firms are suing Mr. Nunez and N. B. S. Development Company, his land and contracting concern, alleging nonpayment of more than $300,000 in bills two other cases, the builder and his company ave been ordered to pay a number of plaintiffs.

While not legally bankrupt, N. B. S. has no known assets.

Mr. Nunez, who lives in Coral Gables, in a lavish home reported to be worth $500,000, was a modest wage earner in 1963, when he left Miami to live in Nassau. Four years later, following the bankruptcy of Gramco, he returned home a multimillionaire, according to former associates.

One associate said that part of Mr. Nunez's job at Gramco had been to coordinate sales in Latin America. He added: "We all knew that it was illegal in every Latin country to sell Gramco bonds. At one time, our entire team of 10 salesmen in Peru was arrested, and it cost us a huge bribe to get them out of jail. After that, our Latin operation went completely underground, with fictitious names, codes, passages and all that C.I.A. stuff."

When Gramco collapsed, thousands of Latin investors were reported to have lost more than $50 million. Some of them are said to have expressed to American diplomats their dismay over Mr. Nunez's appointment.

As a result, according to one high Federal official, the State Department notified the White House early in September that his confirmation might have an adverse effect on United States image in Latin Amer-